Digital Storytelling-An Innovative Methodology to Promote Voices of People with Psychotic Disorders

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People with schizophrenia die earlier than expected due to physical illnesses such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and cancer. Despite substantial evidence about the importance of physical health management of people with schizophrenia to improve quality of life and reduce morbidity and mortality, there is limited research on power imbalances and unjust conditions that lead to health problems and silencing of people with schizophrenia. Bringing the experiences of people with schizophrenia to light for a broader audience requires methodologies that can authentically engage them to have a direct and active role in knowledge production. The evidence produced in this way can further help engage policymakers and health care providers to effect change. The purpose of this presentation is to show how digital storytelling was used with people with schizophrenia as a means of expressing their voice in a collaborative research process. Digital storytelling was used to produce 6 short videos, capturing personal stories of people with schizophrenia in relation to their physical health needs and concerns. The videos were presented in 2 sharing sessions with a total of 15 nurses and healthcare leaders to evaluate the impact of the videos on leaders and practitioners. In their digital stories, participants talked about their embodied experiences and their invisibility in the healthcare system. They exposed the paternalistic approaches of most healthcare providers to addressing their physical health problems and revealed various strategies for levelling the field and compensating for lack of power and their lost identity. Digital stories helped initiate a dialogue with nurses and healthcare leaders to expose power structures and relations that exclude alternative forms of knowledge in psychiatry. By using the power of visual imagery, digital storytelling helps amplify messages, raise awareness, emphasize core values of empathy and compassion, challenge hegemonic and stigmatizing assumptions, and transform attitudes and behaviours.